

## 2009 ADE/CEF Promising Practices Awards Part I: Cover Sheet

Practice Name Desert Mountain Cares  
Name of Principal Lynda Johnson  
Official School Name Desert Mountain School  
School Mailing Address 35959 N. 7th Ave Tel. (623) 445-3500 ext.  
School Website desertmountain.dvusd.org  
City Phoenix Zip 85086 Email Address Lynda.Johnson@dvusd.org

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate. If my program is recognized as a Promising Practice the contents of this application may be made available to the public.

Lynda M. Johnson Date November 26, 2008  
(Principal's signature)

Name of Superintendent Virginia McElyea  
District Name Deer Valley Unified School District Tel. (623) 445-5002  
District Mailing 20402 N. 15th Ave  
City Phoenix Zip 85027 Email Address virginia.McElyea@dvusd.org

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

Virginia B. McElyea Date 11-26-08  
(Superintendent's signature)

## 2009 ADE/CEF Promising Practices Awards

### Part II: Background Information

1. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

- ☐ Urban or large central city      ☒ Suburban  
☐ Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area  
☐ Small city or town in a rural area      ☐ Rural

2. 3 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

\_\_\_\_\_ If less than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

3. Number of students enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school building:

Pre-K <u>28</u>	5th <u>116</u>	10th _____
1st <u>91</u>	6th <u>114</u>	11th _____
2nd <u>90</u>	7th <u>130</u>	12th _____
3rd <u>113</u>	8th <u>131</u>	
4th <u>96</u>	9th _____	TOTAL: <u>1,024</u>

4. Limited English proficient students in the school: 8 % 88 Total Number

Number of languages represented: 7 Specify languages: Spanish, Romanian, Polish,  
French, Bosnian, Chaldean,  
Arabic

5. Students who participate in free/reduced-priced meals: 13 % 134 Total Number

*If this method is not a reasonably accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.*

**1. What is the practice and how have you implemented it in your school or district?**

On the evening of June 11, 2008, a ½ mile tornado swept through the town of Chapman, Kansas. Over 60 homes were destroyed. About 80% of the town suffered major damage including damage to stores, churches and the three schools. Chapman Elementary School was basically destroyed with nearly everything missing or ruined. Through the help of many volunteers and construction workers, modular units were brought in and sidewalks poured. Miraculously, the school was able to open on time.

After we heard about the tragedy at Chapman Elementary School, a group of teachers and students wondered what we could do to help. We are a Character Counts school and have been focusing on the pillar of "caring." We contacted the principal at Chapman Elementary School, Donna Davis, and asked her what her students missed the most. She told us that the students longed for their playground equipment—like tetherball poles and balls, their jungle gym and swings. A committee was formed and a fund raiser began called Desert Mountain Cares Penny Challenge.

Each day on the school-wide, televised announcements, information was presented to students regarding the plight of the students at Chapman Elementary. Our students were reminded that they had an opportunity through a Penny Challenge to help students half way across the United States and to demonstrate that we can care about others—even those we do not know.

The Penny Challenge was a big success. A container for each grade level was placed on a table in the cafeteria where students could drop pennies in their grade level's container. Pennies counted as a plus and silver coins counted as a negative. Every day, the results for each grade level were posted in the form of a bar graph. If a grade level was ahead, then students would "zap" that grade level the following day by placing silver coins in that grade level's container. The results changed dramatically each day and the students had a lot of fun competing at the same time. The final results for the two week fund raiser was \$2,368! We were amazed! The superintendent of Chapman School District, Tony Frieze, was video taped thanking the Desert Mountain students for their generosity and we will soon be sharing videos with Chapman Elementary so that our students can see the results of their giving and form connections with the Chapman students.

**2. How does the specific practice contribute to character development?**

At Desert Mountain School, we strive to teach our students to be kind and compassionate—the Character Counts Pillar of Caring. What better way to demonstrate that character trait than by responding to other students in need. The students could relate to and empathize with fellow students even though they were hundreds of miles away.

**3. What impact is the practice having on students to your school?**

After the Penny Challenge, we collected statements from students to provide anecdotal evidence of the effectiveness of our Penny Challenge. Here are a few of the statements we received:

- Kaliegh (5<sup>th</sup> grade) "It is nice to give money to people to fix stuff. I was glowing inside."
- Jaden (1<sup>st</sup> grade) "I would feel sad if I didn't have any playground equipment. The money will help the other school and the kids will be happy."
- Kyle (7<sup>th</sup> grade) "I liked the cause it was for—to help the kids school in the tornado."
- Nathan (4<sup>th</sup> grade) "It helped me build character by helping other people. I gave money to other people who needed it."
- Joey (6<sup>th</sup> grade) "I enjoyed giving to the penny drive. I like how my grade tried our hardest. All the younger grades kept putting silver coins in our pot. All our grades won!"
- Regan (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) "It was a good idea because we raised money for another school. I liked knowing our school cared about other people."
- Brad (6<sup>th</sup> grade) "I felt like we were doing a good thing. It was cool because it was challenging and it got to be a like a race."
- Michael (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) "I liked putting silver coins in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade jug to bring them down. It was pretty good that we got all that money. If you want someone to do something nice for you, do something nice for them."
- Nathan (4<sup>th</sup> grade) "I liked it because it was hard but fun at the same time. If we didn't help them they wouldn't be able to have a very good recess."
- Jasmine (K) "You have to put the pennies in and they make the playground come back."
- Brooke (8<sup>th</sup> grade) "I liked the cause it went to. Everyone got really competitive because the money was going for something good."
- Mackenzie (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) "I liked the Penny Game. If we lost our playground equipment, I would be sad and happy if someone helped."
- Mason (K) "I brought a lot of pennies. I feel good to help."
- Lily (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) "I liked helping the kids in Kansa. It's nice and it makes me feel good to help."
- Christina (6<sup>th</sup> grade) "I am really glad that I got to help out on raising money for the school. When I make people happy, it makes me happy and that's why I helped."
- Alex (8<sup>th</sup> grade) "I believe it channels competitiveness to a good cause. They are having a hard time in Chapman and it made me feel good that our school pitched in for them."
- Devin (4<sup>th</sup> grade) "We had some fun and also helped people at the same time. Caring means helping others and doing what's right."
- Max (5<sup>th</sup> grade) "I thought it was cool to raise money for another school to help them rebuild. Caring means to help other people."
- Seth (6<sup>th</sup> grade) "We were glad to send you a check. We hope all the students were safe. All of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade pitched in to help your school."
- Miraban (1<sup>st</sup> grade) "When ours (the total) was going higher than the other grades, it was fun."
- Trey (7<sup>th</sup> grade) "It was exciting to see who had the most and who had the least. I thought we were very generous."